

*despite herself, she started to smile, too. "Damn you!" she exclaimed and began to laugh. We laughed together for a long while. . .*

*. . . The woman's therapeutic progress took a leap forward in succeeding sessions. I think a different kind of learning took place, involving taking distance from anxiety and observing it rather than identifying with it.*

The whole of the main thrust of the book is about this - the importance of disidentification with problems. This is of course exactly what psychosynthesis also teaches in its doctrine of the transpersonal self, but Deikman hardly mentions this at all. It is also very close to what Eugene Gendlin is saying in his Focussing approach, where the utmost stress is laid on "clearing a space" from which problems can be looked at with equanimity. But Deikman doesn't mention Gendlin either.

So this seems to me a wilfully isolationist book, which is actually very misleading about mysticism; ignoring totally its religious significance, ignoring the importance of a mystical teacher for spiritual growth, ignoring the limitations of the observing self (except for some rather half-hearted references to enlightenment in Chapter 10) and generally reducing mysticism to what can be practised in the therapy room. The final section on "Selecting a mystical school" is actually a complete cop-out, avoiding all the issues and saying nothing at all.

This book makes me angry, because it could have been so good - Deikman obviously knows his therapy and has some very good things to say about the observing self - and because it lets itself down so often. Mysticism is much more than the earthbound and uninspiring mish-mash we get in this book.

**James Crippledini**

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## **CARL ROGERS IN LONDON**

*On September 15th in London the ILEA together with the British Person Centred Approach Institute mounted a one-day conference on the theme "Freedom to Learn in the 80s". The three facilitators from the Centre for Studies of the Person in California were Chuck Devonshire, John Wood and Carl Rogers, the grand old man of the Human Potential Movement.*

A gentle self-possessed comfortable man in his late 70s, he is still modest enough to claim that he is still "not sure who he is". He is spending his time between travelling - recently South Africa and Japan, and writing and living in retirement. His main theme was the immediate social problem of the alienation of young people both here and in the U.S.

Society he said does not know what to do about young people. Few of them have jobs, few of them have roles in life. They are mostly ignored and rejected by society or at least **feel** ignored and rejected by society. And the racial problem makes it even worse. Black young people are even more unwanted, more ignored and more rejected.

At the same time, whether as cause or effect is unclear, education is becoming more and more authoritarian. There is a move for today's educators to go back to the old days, to use standardized curricula, to emphasize that older people know what is best, know what young people should think, know what young people ought to learn. This, he said, might have made sense in a static society but not in our rapidly changing society. Modern education tends to block young people's ability to make choices and to make decisions. What is particularly dangerous about this is that young people in a few years will be making some of the most important decisions that have ever been made. Decisions about nuclear disarmament; decisions about the future of the family.

The family might indeed be the most important area of change. The age-old concept of the family is today in complete disarray. We need to move forward to a more sensible, more viable pattern of human interrelating. Choices and decisions have to be made.

Modern society must make more intelligent use of its citizens. The whole idea of a technological society is so new that we need to make decisions about how we are going to use it; technology itself is not enough. It must be integrated with the need of the world today. At the moment technology is tending to depersonalize, dehumanize people in society. There are very important decisions to be made here. One of the most frightening possibilities is that people will tend to look to a strong leader to rescue them. Conversely they could choose to be more human, more democratic, more humanistic with each other, towards each other. And here the Person Centred philosophy can offer a genuine revolutionary swing against many of the unwanted currents of life today. Teachers should learn to trust students; students should be enabled to participate in decision making. The idea that young people are capable of self-directed learning and capable of developing a sense of power in themselves is for many old fashioned teachers and managers a frightening concept. But teachers must become facilitators of learning - not just guides and directors. The training of

teachers for a modern age must help them to bring out strength of character in their students and to enable them to exercise power and choice, leading to self-discipline - not discipline imposed by others. Students themselves must learn to decide what to learn, how to learn, how to acquire the resources for learning.

But not only does this feel right philosophically to us, but it is now backed by a very solid body of research. The Person Centred Approach has been shown to lead to acceleration in creative learning, problem solving: it produces better morale and less absenteeism. The old idea that sparing the rod spoils the child has been disproved by research. It is the soft approach that gets results. This is a revolutionary approach that can turn the whole idea of educational structures upside down. It is accordingly very threatening for the teachers and those in power. If they really have to share their power, do they feel they lose power, lose prestige? Frightened teachers, managers, educators and governors make for repressed, unhappy and conformist people. The real revolution of the Person Centred Approach is to turn this whole tendency upside down.

*Carl Rogers with his gentle, eminently reasonable and quiet approach does not sound like a revolutionary. He does not look like a revolutionary. But his ideas and his influence and his power to reach out and tweak at the trappings of authority and status are indeed revolutionary.*

**Vivian Milroy**

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### **A Response to Narelle Grace, Self and Society, Vol.X No.2**

Oh Narelle,

I stretch out my hand across the miles (pages) - were it that I could walk beside your uniqueness, accept your capriciousness, share your loves, excitement, futility, tears, joys, your fire, appreciate you as much as you would me. But I am here, locked in my ivory tower - I hear the children at play - voices shrill on a damp September afternoon - screaming in mock fear. Or maybe it is real? My fears seem real but maybe they are only pretend. I could go out but where would I go where I would be received with warmth and understanding where words and gestures would be meaningful instead of an untranscendable barrier between us of non-communication.

My heart, too, yearns for its soulmate - I join you in your quest for a part-time mental, spiritual, physical, emotional wave-length kindred spirit.

O God, please manifest one quickly for me and one for Narelle - I deserve love - Narelle deserves love - we all deserve love.

**Jill Robinson**